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Service-Learning and Negotiation: Engaging Students in Real-World Projects That Make a Difference

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In recent years, the normative approach to teaching negotiation (i.e., using a combination of lectures, case discussions, and simulation exercises) has been under scrutiny. Calls for change stem from the need to increase the "real-world" applicability of our courses. The author presents service-learning as a potential pedagogical solution. In doing so, she addresses the fit between service-learning and recent calls for change in teaching negotiation; discusses issues related to student learning, course design, and faculty member involvement; and provides sample reflections from past servicelearning negotiation students.

"A key goal of education is preparing students and managers to solve real-world problems."
— Gillespie, Thompson, Loewenstein, and Gentner (1999: 363)

As Gillespie and colleagues aptly reminded us several years ago, one of our goals as negotiation instructors is to prepare students to take what they are learning in the classroom and apply it to real-world contexts. Building on that thought, why stop at simply preparing students when we have the capacity to facilitate engagement? In addition, why not design courses where students actively utilize the tools they learn in our classrooms to address real world problems today? In this article, I argue that one of the most effective ways to do this is to incorporate service-learning pedagogy into our negotiation courses.

Service-Learning

"Service-learning" is a pedagogical tool that has a variety of definitions (Stanton, Giles, and Cruz 1999). In the most general use of the term, service-learning is a branch of experiential education with active engagement as its foundation. Furco (1996: 6) differentiated service-learning from other types of experiential education by observing that service-learning programs have the "intention to equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring." Other definitions of service-learning focus on goals such as civic engagement and civic responsibility (e.g., Bringle and Hatcher 1995 and 1999); values development (e.g., Delve, Mintz, and Stewart 1990); and moral management (e.g., Godfrey 1999). The definition that I have come to use is an adapted version of the American Association of Higher Education's (*Monograph Series on Service- Learning in the Disciplines* 1997). I define service-

learning courses as those that "emphasize academic rigor and the integration of real-world course projects where students produce tangible, professional products for use in the local community as they *work with and learn from* organizations designed to serve community needs" (Kenworthy-U'Ren 2000: 59). As such, my students serve as consultants to nonprofit organizations in the local community. In my negotiation courses, students develop concrete, usable conflict resolution materials for local organizations (see Appendix One for project description).

Although this model is only one application of service-learning, the key concepts across all service-learning definitions and projects, be they explicitly stated or implicit by design, are the same:

(1) a focus on real-world learning;
(2) a course-based foundation;
(3) reciprocity between the student and the community; and
(4) carefully designed reflection.

Service-learning is not volunteering; rather, it requires a deliberate integration of course concepts and service activities (cf. Howard 1998). To use Ernest Boyer's (1996) terms, service-learning has, at its core, a philosophy grounded in the scholarship of engagement where university and civic environments are inexorably intertwined. In this article, service-learning pedagogy as a tool for bridging the theoretical and practical — a tool to max imize student learning in negotiation courses — is described. In support of this pedagogy, anecdotal evidence from past service-learning negotiation projects is presented.

Calls for Change in Negotiation Courses

In this journal in 1997, Roy Lewicki summarized the state of the practice for teaching negotiation and dispute resolution; he provided an historical review of pedagogical development and concluded with a number of recommendations for the field. One of the major issues he raised related to examining ethics and values in negotiation courses. He challenged us to consider the issue of social responsibility and whether it was being adequately addressed and reflected upon in our courses.

In terms of social awareness, service-learning provides an outlet for students to immerse themselves in the real-world context of community needs and resource demands. Students experience, first-hand, issues related to how traditionally resource-poor social service organizations work to negotiate sustainable outcomes. In my courses, I provide an open forum for students to discuss the changing needs of the organizations they are working with. Discussions provide a context for students to consider the varying needs of different agencies and the vast array of potential solutions to problems. Such discussions facilitate knowledge transfer, another area identified as needing development in negotiation courses (Gillespie et al. 1999). I also raise questions related to the potential benefits of private and public sector partnerships, and ask the students to consider how to design partnerships with reciprocity as a central tenet. In my experience as a negotiation instructor, I find that service-learning projects provide a platform for discussing social responsibility and real-world ethical considerations with my students. These concepts become tangible for the students through hands-on experience and observation.

A second issue Lewicki (1997) raised was the need for bridging disciplines. Calls for integration stem from the fact that in the real-world, disciplinary "silos" simply do not exist (Porter and McKibbin 1988). Negotiation and conflict resolution, when set in real-world contexts, often involve logistical and emotional turbulence. Through service-learning projects, students invariably break free from the linear progression we provide in the classroom. They often experience controlled chaos; this occurs through mixed feedback, schedule changes, postponements, layers of bureaucracy, contact person replacements, last-minute information, and the need to balance different client interests and demands (to name a few).

Dealing with real-world complexity requires a broad range of skills (e.g., staying motivated, accepting diversity, being patient, dealing with liability issues and confidentiality agreements, analyzing data, supervising client outreach, conducting marketing surveys, generating trust, organizing team members, securing information). To stimulate reflection on discipline bridg ing, I encourage students to discuss how their project relates to other classes, theories, and practical experiences. So far, their abilities regarding both conceptual and practical integration continue to amaze me.

Feminist theory provides another argument for service-learning development in negotiation courses. Landry and Donnellon (1999) describe one of the problems associated with normative negotiation pedagogy as putting a premium on logic and rationality, teaching students to view negotiations as "objective transactions" void of relational and emotional considerations. Service- learning encounters provide students with intensely emotional, often passion-invoking, experiences whereby "stepping into the other person's shoes" requires social skills and introspective abilities not often tapped in traditional coursework. Time considerations are not as pressing as they are in our in-class simulations; rather, to use my project design as an example, students have the entire semester to explore and understand the "contextual complexity" (Landry and Donnellon 1999) of their projects.

As far as demonstrating the necessity for negotiation training, many of us introduce the topic of negotiation as a frequent phenomenon in our daily lives. We reinforce this idea by providing examples of different types of negotiations and then eliciting further examples from our students. The idea that negotiations are common occurrences is verbally espoused and communicated in written form through assigned readings and texts (e.g., Fisher, Ury, and Patton 1991; Lewicki, Saunders, and Minton 2001). Designing a semester-long, hands-on negotiation consulting project allows the students to experience and reflect upon their respective series of negotiations related to project completion. One of the primary learning benefits of this project is that while some negotiations are planned (see Appendix Two for student/agency negotiation planning sheet), a multitude of others arise without notice throughout the course of the semester. Thus, students are continually challenged to apply what they are learning in the course to their frequent, often sporadically patterned, negotiations — an outcome that is a primary goal and constant challenge for negotiation instructors (Shapiro and Watson 2000).

Reflection

To elicit deeply introspective learning from students requires carefully designed reflection tools (Jackson 1993). Reflection is an intentional process; it is founded upon the notion that experience alone does not constitute learning. Rather, reflective exercises are designed to serve as a bridge between a student's experience and learning objectives (Bringle and Hatcher 1999). Reflection specific to service-learning pedagogy has its roots in the work of John Dewey (see historical review in Giles and Eyler 1994). Dewey (1933) believed that to maximize student learning, instructors must tap into the students' intrinsic motivations by providing ample time for students to engage in novel, interesting, and challenging coursework. Students must be able to see the value of their learning, not only as a tool for self-development and heightened interpersonal skills but also as a catalyst for increased social awareness.

Service-learning practitioners have a variety of reflection tools at their disposal (e.g., journals, research papers, directed readings, class presentations, discussion forums). Coupling those tools with our understanding of various student learning styles (see Kolb 1984) provides a template for selecting reflective exercises for use in our courses. In my negotiations courses, I try to tap both active and passive learning modes. Students actively engage in a process of researching and developing conflict resolution materials while passively reflecting on their experiences. Their assignments include two written reports (one individual and one group project paper), one oral presentation, and three group project meetings with me throughout the semester. I typically use the first group project meeting to begin a dialogue with the students about what reflection is, why it is important, and how it applies to

this project — my goal is to elicit awareness, understanding, and curiosity from the students about their roles as reflective practitioners.

The group project report requires students to obtain reflective observations from all involved constituents (i.e., agency clients and staff, the team members, and experts or other resource providers), thus broadening the evaluative depth of the assessment. My goal in utilizing a form of 360-degree. reflection feedback is to heighten the students' awareness of, and commitment to, reciprocity as a key component of integrative outcomes.

The oral presentation and focus group meetings are designed with three principles of negotiation in mind, to:

(1) develop students' communication skills;
(2) help them focus on the power of framing; and
(3) reinforce the idea that preparation is a central part of effective negotiation.
On an individual level, students are asked to write about how their projects relate to course concepts, motivations, and learning (see Appendix Three for assessment guidelines). Each of the reflective tools I use is carefully grounded in negotiation theory. As a result, students are continually challenged to "step into others' shoes," "focus on the potential for integrative outcomes," utilize strategies for "getting to yes" and, when necessary, work toward "getting past no." Fisher, Ury, and Patton's (1991) *Getting to YES* and Ury's (1993) *Getting Past No* are assigned readings.

Demands on the Instructor

It probably comes as no surprise that utilizing service-learning as a pedagogical tool may demand additional time and a non-normative approach to classroom interaction for instructors. To provide a well-grounded, carefully designed service-learning course is not an easy task. Logistically, demands may include — but are not limited to — any number of the following tasks: organizing placement sites; checking institutional liability coverage; gaining clearance from department/school; organizing transportation or transportation options; creating student/agency contracts; structuring reflection exercises; organizing the "when" and "where" of community partner involvement; following up with community partners before, during, and after the course; and taking time to assist with any logistical problems that arise.

Demands for some instructors may move beyond logistic into philosophical as the requirements for "effective" classroom interaction shift. As can be seen in the above list, service-learning projects are complex; there is no one right way, no right answer, no key to making it work every time. Class discussions are dynamic. Classrooms become fresh, interactive, nonrepetitive environments (with little opportunity for the "Groundhog Day" phenomenon; see Robinson 1998). As such, faculty members have to let go of their roles as "expert," accepting roles as learners alongside the students — creating shared experiences (Weick 1997). This requires humility and psychological preparedness on the part of instructors (Fukami 1997), as it stimulates "messy" and ambiguous environments for discussion (Landry and Donnellon 1999). In my service-learning courses, I let students lead the discussion about how their experiences relate to the course concepts. This format not only cognitively challenges the students to think through the

application of course concepts but also creates a situation where they are recognized as the experts, an important dimension of developing their discipline-specific self-efficacy (Bandura 1997; Bandura et al. 1996).

Outcomes

As is the goal for any multiparty negotiation, service-learning has the potential to benefit all involved constituents — the students, community members, the host institution, and the faculty member. In my experiences with negotiation courses, student reactions to the project have been overwhelmingly positive. This is most likely a result of the paucity of real-world consulting experiences students are encouraged to pursue during their undergraduate careers. One way of validating a real-world service-learning project is to thoroughly interweave it into the course — to challenge the students to think through *how* each topic applies to their continued experience. As such, student reflections on what they have learned about negotiation theory as a result of the project are varied. In 2001, I incorporated this project into my undergraduate negotiations course. The majority of my students were 20-24-year-old business majors in their last year of university coursework, with approximately fifty percent of my students from countries other than Australia, eighty percent of whom had part-time work experience. Sample topics from my 2001 student reflection papers include:

Effective Communication. A student wrote the following about a situation where she and her team members were going to miss a deadline at their agency:

> I informed my team member that we would not be able to keep her promise to the agency director. Through clarifying my situation, refocusing on the product under development and our group goal of providing a usable product, we announced to the agency director the benefits of waiting to see a 90-plus percent complete product. Using strong compelling language and enthusiasm assailed any arguments or questions the director may have had. Indeed, she was more than happy to wait another few days for a better product. Time was not an issue to her, as we initially perceived it to be. . . Like all interactions, nothing resolves issues like open, honest communication. I believe the most important point I have learned is to validate and understand the other person's point of view and underlying interests. Listen actively and respond honestly.

Stereotypes. One student, writing about her early interactions with agency staff, stated the following:

> I expected the Catholic school faculty to be extremely conservative, strict and unwilling to cooperate with us. This stereotype severely distorted my perception, causing me to be nervous unnecessarily. I was pleasantly surprised to find they were charming and very receptive towards us. Had I displayed my fear, I would have undermined our group's credibility.

Self-Interest as a Motivator. Another student, reflecting on her motivations for the project, had the following reflection:

> My main motivation for this project was that it was a required course component and I had to participate in order to pass. . . Another motivator was a real-life one; I am graduating at the end of the semester and will be looking

for work. The idea of working on a kit that would help you to get a job was good because we incorporated an assignment into something that we all should do anyway.

Types of Projects

The projects themselves are as varied as the reflections. For example, in my undergraduate negotiations course at Bond University in Australia during the 2001 academic year, seven student teams created the following products:

(1) A "STAR" conflict resolution wall poster, bookmarks, and powerpoint presentation to be used with all grade four elementary school children as a supplement to the participating organization's bullies program.

(2) A "Used car buyer's guide: Driving a hard bargain" to be distributed to all incoming students at our university orientation.

(3) A "Foster the Future" brochure to be used as outreach to recruit foster parents for a local community organization (distributed through local vendors).

(4) A "Going Live" panel presentation, tool kit, and powerpoint presentation to be used by all of the university's graduate employment managers. The panel presentation alone had 15 industry representatives and over 80 student attendees.

(5) A "How to Resolve Neighborhood Disputes" brochure, created in conjunction with the State Dispute Resolution Centre, and made available to over 450,000 local residents through the city council.

(6) A "Protect Yourself Against Spinal Injury" video and presentation kit, created in conjunction with a national spinal injury association, to be used in high schools throughout the state.

(7) A "Business School Dispute Resolution" template designed specifically for use in the Bond Business School. The template was approved in 2001 by the University Senate and is now attached to every syllabus distributed through the Business School.

These student-initiated products had, and will continue to have, a positive impact on our local community. For community agencies, the service-learning experience provides more than a product tailored to their specific needs. In the short term, it creates an opportunity for the agencies to expose students to their organizational missions, clients, and needs. And in the long term, there exists potential for collaboration with students' future business organizations. Agency directors frequently comment, to their surprise, on the high level of responsibility, commitment, and interest demonstrated by the students. The usability of the products is a testament to the students' hard work.

Together, agencies and universities have the potential to benefit through reciprocal collaboration. Service-learning projects are remarkable tools for developing community partnerships. For example, there were two newspaper articles written about the students' projects from my 2001

course. The articles focused on the needs of the agency, the skills of our university students, the resultant products and their distribution, and the benefits of universities espousing experiential learning. As a result, the local organizations received much needed publicity about their missions and needs while the university publicly demonstrated its commitment to civil society, an important dimension of service-learning at the institutional level (Zlotkowski 1999).

At the individual faculty level, Holland (1999) has identified several factors that influence service-learning integration. She found that one of the major drivers for faculty service-learning engagement was personal — faculty who were actively engaged in public service reported high levels of intrinsic motivation as a catalyst for involvement. A second major reason was pedagogical — faculty reported perceived increases in the quality of their teaching and student learning. This was particularly true for faculty with disciplinary driven ties to external audiences (e.g., nursing, education, social work).

Other obvious drivers for faculty involvement in service-learning include institutional support; promotion criteria regarding service requirements; incentive schemes (e.g., internal or external grants and fellowships, course releases, seed funding); institutional and department-specific foci on experiential education; potential for research in recognized publication outlets; and visibility and transferability of course design. Analyzing why faculty become involved with (and continue to implement) service-learning is an important area for future research. However, regardless of underlying reasons why faculty incorporate service-learning in their courses, the format for how service-learning projects are designed is paramount. The integration of service-learning into course material should be clear, comprehensive, and theoretically-driven.

Those who choose to integrate service-learning into negotiation courses will be at the forefront of pedagogical innovation. As such, careful attention to detail and continued discussion of our successes, challenges, adaptations, and learning are critical. One forum for continued discourse is the Academy of Management. Throughout the past five years, increased attention has been paid to service-learning at the Academy's annual conference, with award-winning symposia, multi-disciplinary sponsorships, and the new Service-Learning Fellows Program underway (see www.aom.pace.edu for more information). Additionally, publication outlets like this journal, the *Journal of Management Education*, and the new *Academy of Management Learning and Education* are well-regarded outlets for theory and research on negotiation pedagogy. In short, service-learning is an ascending pedagogical tool, ripe for application in our field.

Conclusion

My belief is that the integration of service-learning projects into negotiation courses provides one avenue through which we can incorporate the benefits of experiential education in a powerful real-world context for our students. Service-learning projects have the potential to develop students' analytical, critical, creative, ethical, and interpersonal skills. In doing so, service-learning projects address Lewicki's (1997) overall criticism of current trends in negotiation pedagogy. He wrote, "effective negotiation is not a single

skill; rather, it is a complex collection of elements that entail aspects of strategizing, advocacy, communication, persuasion, and cognitive packaging and repackaging of information. Yet, we teach it as though it were a single skill, and seldom pay attention to helping students diagnose, develop, or refine critical skill subsets" (1997: 265).

Service-learning projects force students to recognize the multifaceted nature of problem solving. As a pedagogical tool, service-learning is designed to encourage students to constructively think through classroom-based skills and apply them to complex situations in fluid environments. If we teach students what a "win-win" situation means theoretically, we ought to challenge them to create one practically. In the real-world, integrative outcomes often require hard work, determination, social and interpersonal knowledge and skills, genuine interest, skillful communication, commitment, and patience. Service-learning projects bring students face-to-face with each of these requirements, thus creating a new realm of learning where students move beyond basic theoretical preparation into active social engagement.

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